

# JOB

## CHAPTERS 1 & 2

### Introduction

*“Why us?”*

*“Why me?”*

*“What have I done to deserve this?”*

*“Why would God allow this to happen?”*

Those are just a few of the questions all of us have asked or have been asked in times of suffering. The mystery of suffering, or what C.S. Lewis called “the problem of pain,” is perhaps the most basic of all human dilemmas.

Let’s narrow it down. If bad things only happened to bad people, we would have fewer questions, if any. But bad things don’t just happen to bad people; bad things happen to good people. Bad things even happen to a select group of good people – *God’s* people. The fact that we know God as our Father and Jesus Christ as our Savior doesn’t exempt us from suffering. If anything, we become more susceptible to suffering as the special targets of our spiritual enemies. We suffer from what seem to be spiritual attacks precisely because we are seeking to live godly lives.

Sooner or later, whether philosophically or personally, you *will* wrestle with the mystery of suffering, with the problem of pain. You’ll ask those ageless questions during a time of spiritual attack. When you do, you’ll need the Book of Job.

In what is probably the earliest book of the Bible, and maybe the first book ever written, Job wrestles with the mystery of suffering. He wasn’t a bad person; he was a good person, one of *God’s* people. God Himself said of Job that there was none like him on the earth, that he was a blameless and upright man who feared God and

shunned evil. Yet he was spiritually attacked and his name has become a byword for suffering, his life a timeless declaration that the righteous suffer.

“Why us?” “Why me?” “What have I done to deserve this?” “Why would God allow this to happen?” From the book and life of Job we’ll come to understand two things:

#1 Behind Your Suffering  
God Has His Purpose

#2 Beyond Your Suffering  
God Has His Perfecting

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#1 Behind Your Suffering  
God Has His Purpose

Job becomes the example for all time of the righteous suffering. God Himself raises the issue of the righteous suffering! He anticipated our dilemma with suffering and loved us enough to reveal that He has purpose in it.

What strikes you about these opening chapters is that there was something going on *behind* Job’s suffering. Job didn’t know what it was; but we do, because it is recorded for us. The dilemma on earth involved a drama in the heavenlies.

On the earth, Job’s righteousness is established in the opening verses:

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

Job lived after the flood of Noah, probably after the scattering of peoples at the Tower of Babel. He lived between the time of Abraham and Moses - certainly before Moses. Both Ezekiel and James refer to Job as a real man, not a myth. He was a real man, and this is his real story.

“Blameless” is not the same as “sinless.” It means that there was nothing in his life that you could accuse him of; he was no

hypocrite. “Upright” means that he had integrity. One word describes conduct; the other, character.

He was also consecrated unto the Lord – fearing God and shunning evil. He was a believer seeking to walk uprightly before the Lord – not unlike yourself.

Job 1:2 And seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

Job 1:3 Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

Job was the leading citizen of his day.

Job 1:4 And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.

These were birthday celebrations. There’s no indication that they were immoral or sinful. Job was simply concerned about the spiritual welfare of his children, and used the occasions of their feasting to remind them of the things of God. He was a great dad!

Job was righteous – but he would suffer, and greatly.

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

The things that are revealed here, in this one marvelous verse, could occupy our study for many weeks. We’ll try to summarize some of them.

There is a spiritual realm that exists all around us. It is no less real for being unseen. In it angels exist – both faithful and fallen. Among the fallen is Lucifer, Satan – the devil.

There *is* a personal devil – a malevolent, fallen angel who walks to and fro upon the earth seeking to destroy human beings – and especially those who fear the Lord and shun evil. He especially likes to accuse believers, and to attack them. He thinks that he can turn their hearts away from worshipping God.

Job 1:7 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

Job 1:9 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

Job 1:10 "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Job 1:11 "But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

Job 1:12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Satan's argues that Job only worships God because God has blessed him with wealth. God answers that He is worthy to receive Job's worship apart from blessing him with wealth. Thus is revealed the purpose behind Job's sufferings.

I can't stress enough that everything that happens to you, even in your suffering, is by God's permission. It must pass by and through the throne of God in heaven – a throne of grace that knows only God's glory and your good.

If Satan had his way, all of you would be in the position of Job. But he *doesn't* have his way. He only accomplishes God's will.

There is always a great deal of interest in the devil, and in spiritual warfare. The thing to remember is this scene in the heavenlies, and especially one important symbol: the Throne of God! God summons the devil to the Throne, and he must come. God sets the boundaries of the devil's activities, and he must obey. God rules from His Throne – and that includes ruling over the devil.

God and the devil are not involved in a great struggle. It's no struggle at all from God's perspective.

Job 1:13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house;

Job 1:14 and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,

Job 1:15 "when the Sabeans raided them and took them away; indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

Job 1:16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

Job 1:17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

Job 1:18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

Job 1:19 "and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

We all ought to be weeping by the end of verse nineteen. This really happened to a real man.

How did he respond?

Job 1:20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

Job 1:21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job 1:22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

When asked, "Why should the righteous suffer?", C.S. Lewis replied, "Why not? They're the only one's who can handle it!" The Lord's *blessings* may be preferred over His *buffetings*, but in both His grace can be your sufficiency.

Chapter two sends Job into deeper distress:

Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.

Job 2:2 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Job 2:3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."

Job 2:4 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.

Job 2:5 "But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

Job 2:6 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

Wealth was not important enough to Job to cause him to curse God for its lack; perhaps his health was?

Job 2:7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

Job 2:8 And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.

Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

He had suffered the loss of his *wealth* – including his sons and his daughters. Now he suffered the loss of his *health*. Listen to the physical sufferings that are revealed as you read through the book: severe itching (2:8), insomnia (2:4), running sores and scabs (2:5), nightmares (2:13-14), loss of appetite (3:24), infested with worms (7:5), difficulty breathing (9:18), foul breath (19:17), weight loss (19:20), chills and fever (21:6), diarrhea (30:27), high fever (30:30), and blackened skin (30:30). He took up residence outside the city, in its garbage dump, where wild dogs fought over scraps of food, and where people brought their dung to be burned. Add to that the mental anguish of all he had experienced, and the hopelessness for any future change. Add to that his wife's discouragement. He was reduced to a piece of garbage, a piece of dung.

How did he respond?

Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Again, Job fell upon the grace of God. It was God's choice to grant prosperity; now it was God's choice to grant adversity. He continued to walk by faith.

Samuel Rutherford once said, "It is faith's work to claim... loving-kindness out of all the roughest strokes of God."

By faith you can know that there is always, always a benevolent purpose in your suffering. Life's bitterest enigmas are reconcilable with this purpose - *if you only saw behind the scenes*.

But you don't fully see – and that is precisely the point! Take Job as an example: What if he had known exactly what was transpiring in heaven? Where would be the need for faith? Enough was revealed to him to make his faith intelligent; enough was reserved to give his faith development.

God will do the same in your life with your suffering. Enough is revealed to you; but much will be reserved from you. Behind it all, there is God's purpose.

Alfred Edersheim said,

“We cannot understand the meaning of many trials; God does not explain them. To explain a trial would be to destroy its object, which is that of calling forth simple faith and implicit obedience. If we knew why the Lord sent us this or that trial, it would thereby cease to be a trial either of faith or patience.”

God deems it enough for you to know that He has a purpose to fulfill behind your suffering. Faith fills in the blanks behind your suffering.

There is something *beyond* your suffering as well:

## #2 Beyond Your Suffering God Has His Perfecting

The Book of Job opens in chapters one and two with a historical prologue. Beginning in chapter three, and continuing through chapter forty-two, verse six, it is a poem. The remaining eleven verses are a historical epilogue – they tell the end of the story.

The point is that there is always a foreknown outcome of blessing in your suffering. The real point is expressed by Job himself, who says in chapter 23:10-12,

Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

Job 23:11 My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside.

Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food.

Beyond your suffering is God’s *perfecting*. He is maturing you, growing you, refining you. “He that has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Some suffering is *punitive*... Some is *preventive*... But some is for *perfecting*.

Instead of asking, “How can I get out of this?”, ask, “*What* can I get out of this?” Suffering will either make you bitter, or better. It’s up to you.

## Conclusion

**You** are eventually in for sufferings of this kind. The devil still walks about to and fro on the earth, seeking whom he may attack – and especially Christians.

Will you curse God in your heart by thinking He doesn't keep His promises?

You won't if you remember that *behind* your suffering God has His **purpose**, and that *beyond* your suffering God has His **perfecting**.